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SCIENCE

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NOT TEN BUT TWELVE!

THERE has come to my hands a petition in the form of an open "Letter to Lord Balfour" ("Chairman on Weights, Measures, Coinage, etc."), circulated in the name of the "World Trade Club," and calling upon "United States American President, His Excellency Woodrow Wilson, United States American Congress, etc.," and "British Premier, His Excellency David Lloyd George, Houses of Parliament, etc.," for "legislation, promulgation, Orders in council that will bring about the exclusive use of Meter-Liter-Gram by the United States of America" and "The British Isles."

As the matter is of far-reaching scope and prime importance, may I be allowed a word of earnest protest.

The reasons advanced in the fifteen pages of argument, on disregarding the ill-advised and ill-founded appeal to national prejudice against the alleged Germanic character of our present system (or chaos), amount merely to the oft-repeated affirmation that the metric system, being consistently decimal, is far simpler, more convenient, and time-saving than any non-decimal system, since reductions from unit to unit are made merely by shifting the point, as in dollars and cents. That herein lies a certain very considerable convenience is not denied in any quarter and needs no detailed exposition. Also the advantage of world-wide uniformity in weights, measures, and coinage are plain and uncontested. But this latter fact is no reason for the Anglo-Saxon world to pass over to the Latin-German system, rather than for the latter to yield to some far superior system of the former. While conceding all that may be said with any show of reason in favor of a decimal system, we must not forget nor disguise the very grave disadvantages that inhere ineradicably in it, especially in its cum-